

Early Vancouver

Volume One

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Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1931-1932.

*A Collection of Historical Data, Maps, and Plans Made with the Assistance of
Pioneers of Vancouver Between March and December 1931.*

About the 2011 Edition

The 2011 edition is a transcription of the original work collected and published by Major Matthews. Handwritten marginalia and corrections Matthews made to his text over the years have been incorporated and some typographical errors have been corrected, but no other editorial work has been undertaken. The edition and its online presentation was produced by the City of Vancouver Archives to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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30 DECEMBER 1931 - GRANVILLE. ROYAL SAPPERS AND MINERS. EARLY VANCOUVER. W.H. GALLAGHER, ESQ.

"It was the Royal Engineers" (no) "who cleared the forest off old Granville," said Mr. W.H. Gallagher, and then as an afterthought added, "and a few pioneers of pioneers; men who had permission to go there, for instance, Arthur Sullivan's father cleared his own land—on Cordova Street, between Abbott and Carrall—and Sam Brighthouse and John Hailstone built a place where they sold milk, where they kept the cans, the milks cans, fifteen years before Vancouver was thought of.

"They kept their cows out on the ranch, on the cliff at the foot of, and to the west a little, Burrard Street, overlooking the inlet."

Mr. Gallagher is growing older; a shock of steel white hair has replaced what was once dark brown, and now clothes a venerable head; not surprising considering that, forty-five years ago, he was old enough to act as special constable at the old Westminster Avenue Bridge the night of the Great Fire on the 13th June 1886. Today this veteran pioneer, now 72, formerly an alderman of the city, still continues to take a lively interest in civic and business affairs. He represented British Columbia at the great Buenos Aires (South America) Exposition a year or so ago, and now is actively engaged at his office, and early wooden building at the southeast corner of Richards and Pender streets. He lives at 1925 Comox Street, but came to Vancouver in April 1886, before the Fire. He is now packing up, preparatory to a pleasure trip to Europe.

GRANVILLE, 1885.

"The townsite of Granville was a small oblong, less than twenty acres—four blocks—along the shore of Burrard Inlet, low lying at the narrowest separation of False Creek and Burrard Inlet; during the high tide months of June and December, the water from both arms of the sea flowed freely across what is now Columbia Street.

"Prior to 1885, Granville was nothing more than a secluded pioneer settlement; a clearing, three hundred and fifty yards along the shore, two hundred and fifty yards into the forest, boxed in by tall trees; damp, wet, the actual clearing littered with stumps and forest debris, and a profusion of undergrowth, including luxuriant skunk cabbage. A great wall of trees stood along Hastings Street, and faced the waterfront. Two similar walls flanked the clearing, along Cambie Street on the west, and Carrall Street on the east. All else was verdant woods. The trees east of Carrall Street were cut down in 1885, those west of Cambie in 1886.

"Our pioneer thoroughfare was Hastings Road, a winding crooked wagon road which skirted the shore between Hastings Mill and Gastown, running in and out among the trees in the same general direction as Alexander Street and Railway Avenue do today, but between those streets and the present Powell Street. Before the fire of June 13th 1886, it continued on across Carrall Street to what is now known as Water Street, which, for half its length between Carrall and Abbott streets, was bridged over tidal land over which, at high tide, the waters of the inlet flowed. Continuing on, beyond Abbott Street to the west, Water Street became a wagon trail which corkscrewed a sinuous way in and out among the stumps until, just beyond Cambie Street, it circled round in the trees to a primitive landing on the shore, at which boats from Moodyville and even Port Moody landed freight, not passengers. The landing stood almost directly below, but slightly to the east of the foot of Homer Street. It was to this wharf that the refugees, flying before the fire, ran for protection from the blast, and whence women and children were conveyed to the hulk *Robert Ker* for safety, in small boats. The Water Street trail did not lead to Granville Street; all was forest up there.

"I have been up to John Morton's, up on old Seaton Street, now Hastings Street West, at the foot of Burrard, on the 'Bluff,' but how I got there I don't know now; perhaps a continuation of the Water Street trail did lead up in that direction. He had a small piece of land cleared there, an acre or so partly cleared, and some cows. It was the water from the spring, and the clearing, which was responsible for the location there of the Chinaman's camp when the clearing of the land west of Burrard Street commenced, and where part of the Chinese rioting took place afterwards. But Brighthouse and Hailstone wanted it for their cows; they had no idea there would ever be a Vancouver; that was what they preempted District Lot 185, the West End, for.

"Brighthouse himself told me what he wanted the land for; he preempted District Lot 185 because he did not want others bothering him. He also told me that when the man who was surveying was laying out the boundaries, the man had said to him, 'I will put in the island'" (Deadman's Island) "'in your preemption for five dollars.' Hailstone said, 'Don't give it to him; we've got enough stuff now.' Sam was a prince with his money. He would always give money for a hospital, or go down to Victoria to battle for the city's interests at his expense. There was nothing small about Sam.

"The Water Street trail led to the little old landing; the wharf at the foot of Cambie Street was built after the fire, to unload lumber from scows with which to rebuild the city. It was owned by the Moodyville Sawmill Company of Moodyville, a very early Burrard Inlet lumber firm with a large export trade. Mr. Matheson, father of Mr. George Matheson, assistant land registrar at the Court House now, was the Vancouver agent at the sawmill, and it was he, together with the late Mr. Tiffen, who was associated with him, who built the Cambie Street wharf. The water off the foot of Cambie Street was shallow; it was deeper at the foot of Abbott Street.

"At the foot of Carrall Street there had been for a good many years a public float; a small affair, about three feet wide; just two cedar logs lashed together and running away out beyond the shallow shore, almost exactly where the Union Steamship dock is now. The mail for Moodyville, which was quite an important place, went that way by the little steamer *Senator*, owned by Captain McFadden; there were three *Senators*, a first, a second and a third, and the Hastings Mill had two or three small tugs. Afterwards, Captain McFadden sold his business to the Union Steamship Company, and they had the contract to take the mail to Moodyville; that was what the *Senator* was doing.

"On the shore side of Water Street, at the corner of Carrall Street, stood the Sunnyside Hotel, where His Excellency the Governor-General, the Marquis of Lorne and the Princess Louise once

stayed.” (She was never in Granville Village.) “Its back verandah was built out over the water, at least at high tide; its front faced the famed Maple Tree, burnt in the fire, and under whose branches were our first ‘political headquarters.’ Next to the Sunnyside Hotel was George Black’s butcher shop, also on piles; there were no other buildings on the shore between George Black’s and Abbott Street, although the land was surveyed into lots—wet lots. The Reverend Joseph Hall’s Methodist church was on the shore beyond, to the west of Abbott Street. I do not recall any other buildings on the shore between Carrall Street and Cambie Street, not in April 1886, although there may have been.

“On the south side of Water Street, facing the water, the Deighton Hotel stood on the corner of Carrall Street, facing the Sunnyside; then next the very old Court House and jail, probably not the first one. That was where the balloting took place in the first civic election, where the first City Council was sworn in, and where the first City Council met in a small sitting room with a long table. I will tell you more about that later. Tom Cyrs’ Granville Hotel came next; he bought it from Joe Mannion; it was where the Grand Hotel was afterwards and is now. Next was ‘Billy’ Jones’ Terminal saloon, then the Gold House, owned by old Mr. Gold, and on the corner of Abbott Street was a restaurant, Pete Clare’s, they say; I forget. The whole length of Water Street between Abbott and Carrall streets was planked right up to the store doors and, where necessary, piled. I presume the provincial government had done the bridging in the earlier days.

“The Regina Hotel, at the southwest corner of Cambie and Water streets, was not finished at the time of the great fire, but they were living in it. There were no buildings on the first two lots across the street, where the boot factory is now; that helped to save the Regina Hotel. The first wooden headquarters offices of the C.P.R., on the cliff about the foot of Richards Street, they too were saved.

“Both Carrall Street and Abbott Street were opened up, and, being joined together by Water and Cordova streets, formed a single square, or oblong block—the only block in town; all else ran wild. Carrall and Water streets had the stores. On the corner of Carrall and Powell streets was the Ferguson Block, next to it the Post Office—on Carrall Street. On the flat iron corner opposite were three little one-storey stores.

“The residential street was Cordova Street. At the back of the Court House, but facing Cordova Street, Jonathan Miller lived. He was our jailer before the fire, our whole police force in himself, and afterwards, for so many years, Vancouver’s postmaster. The postmaster of old Granville, or rather Vancouver as it had become, resigned a day or so before the Fire or just after it, and Mr. Miller, being a government official, got the appointment. About the middle of the block was Mrs. Sullivan’s home, whose sons Arthur and Charles lived with her, and whose husband had cleared their land with his own hands. Charles was afterwards drowned at Andy Linton’s boat house at the foot of Carrall Street. On the corner of Abbott and Carrall streets, facing Abbott Street, was a row of Chinese cabins, and some other occupants of ill repute.

“On the corner of Water and Abbott streets, where the Winters Hotel is now, there was a nice new building facing on Abbott Street, just completed. It was destroyed in the fire; I don’t think they ever received a cent of revenue from it. There were many similar instances of misfortune; building was going on in haste, the first evidences of Vancouver’s rapid expansion were being experienced.

“On the remainder of the clearing of Old Granville Townsite—that is, up to the trees—there were no buildings to speak of prior to April 1886, just stumps and rubbish.

“From the corner of Carrall and Cordova streets, a wagon road or trail led southwards diagonally across Columbia Street towards the Westminster Avenue Bridge on False Creek. It skirted the lower levels of the creek waters, which came up to Pender Street and Columbia Street, passed along that shore near where the gas works now stands on Main Street, and finally reached the bridge on False Creek and continued on by the ‘new road’ to New Westminster. From Granville to the bridge it passed through forest; it was not near the site of the present Main Street at any point until it reached the bridge.

“A trail ran up Hastings Street from about where the B.C. Electric Railway Depot is now, as far as Woodward’s department store, and thus far it might have been possible for a two-wheeled cart to get by, but west of Abbott Street on Hastings Street, towards Victory Square, the trail was too narrow.

“Another important trail ran, in 1886, from the ‘residential area’ on Cordova Street, up Abbott Street to Pender Street and Cambie Street, climbing the hill past the old hospital and school grounds, and wandering off into the woods, goodness knows where, until finally it came out at the foot of Granville Street on False Creek near Robertson and Hackett’s sawmill now. It was used by hunters, and loggers from the logging camps out on English Bay, near Jericho. It had been an old Indian trail. When you reached the salt water at the foot of Granville Street on False Creek, you waved a stick with a rag for a flag, and an Indian would come over in a canoe from the Reserve and take you across and bring you back again, for four bits. An old Indian lived at the foot of Granville Street; he would ferry you over for two bits. I have had them call for me and bring me back many times. There was lots of excitement down at Greer’s Beach in 1886, and the fellows used to go over there to see what the place was like.”

CLEARING THE FOREST AWAY.

It was remarked to Mr. Gallagher that Mr. William Hunt of 7th Avenue West has in his possession a very old painting in oil, done by his father Mr. C. Hunt in 1895, from a photograph given him at that time by Mr. Norman Caple, a very early photographer of Vancouver, and which Mr. Hunt Sr. says Mr. Caple told him at the time he requested him to paint it, was of Granville Street looking south from Pender Street in 1884. It shows a buggy travelling on an almost straight uphill trail, and towering forest on both sides.

“How could that be, even in 1884,” replied Mr. Gallagher. “Of course, the old logging roads always led downhill, but in 1884 no buggy could possibly drive up or down Granville Street. The logging road, which came down from the top of the hill in almost the exact position of Granville Street today, had great wide skids, ten feet wide or more, and in the winter of 1886 these were still in position. Anyone who has seen the old corduroy roads will understand; they were made of logs a foot or more in diameter, and laid side by side. In the autumn of 1886, the C.P.R. was hauling stumping powder and camp supplies in ‘stone boats’ over those skids. Early in the summer of 1887, the C.P.R., under the direction of Mr. L.A. Hamilton, C.P.R. surveyor and an alderman, cleared and graded Granville Street, and the skids were then removed and destroyed. They rough graded a road, and planked it, ten or twelve feet wide, wide enough for a drive, and at their own expense.

“In the other direction, on the slope facing south, the logging road ran from the crest of the hill about Robson Street, towards False Creek, but it did not follow Granville Street; it sheared off to the east—the land sloped in that direction, and the logs from that area were yarded into False Creek by Angus Fraser, to about where the C.P.R. roundhouse now stands. Oxen, probably six or seven yoke on one log, dragged the logs out of that trail as late as 1887.

“I think perhaps the old painting might be of Granville Street South, across False Creek, opened by the C.P.R. about 1890. It could not be Granville Street from Pender Street.”